

Untold Italy Episode 132 - Why you need to spend at least 3 days in Venice

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 132.

Ciao a tutti and Benvenuti to Untold Italy, the travel podcast, where you go to the towns and villages, mountains and lakes, hills and coastlines of Bella Italia. Each week your host Katy Clarke takes you on a journey in search of magical landscapes of history, culture, wine, gelato, and, of course, a whole lot of pasta. If you're dreaming of Italy and planning future adventures there, you've come to the right place.

Katy

Ciao a tutti! Hi Everyone! It's Katy here, back from my travels in Italy and bursting with news to share with you all. Of course there will be lots of new episodes to come as I visited over half the Italian regions during a truly magical and exciting 5 weeks of fun and adventure meeting new friends and finding inspiration along the way.

But I wanted to share with you the absolute best bit of our trip, and that was meeting up with many of our podcast guests that I had only ever spoken to on the phone or via Zoom. In fact, prior to this trip I had only met a couple of our guests in person so it was truly a fantastic experience to share laughs and hugs with people I've come to know very well over the past couple of years.

I met Olivia from Piedmont, now in Rome, Pierpaulo in Sorrento, Arianna from Tuscany and Nikki in Puglia all for the first time. We spent time with Sarah and Sal from Umbria and Debora in Arezzo, Elisabetta from Venice and of course Holly and Gianluca in Capri. And I even managed to grab a few precious hours in Rome with Corinna, our guest on today's show. Corinna is one of our favorite guests and it may surprise you to know that up until that day in early June we'd never actually met in person. She is like an old, dear friend who I deeply admire for her passion for Italy and dedication to sharing its culture, stories and unique secrets that are, after all, what makes a trip to Italy so special. Author of the Glam Italia guides, Corinna is celebrating the release of her latest book 101 Fabulous Things to do in Venice and she's joined me today to share some of the reasons why you need to plan to spend at least 3 days in the beautiful lagoon city to begin to appreciate it.

Katy

Benvenuta Corinna, my dear friend, welcome back to the Untold Italy podcast.

Corinna

Thank you, Katy. Thank you for having me back yet again. I so appreciate it.

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Katy

I am always, always delighted to have you on the podcast. And today I'm so excited because - here we are finally helping you launch your new book, the latest in the Glam Italia Guidebook series. And you know I've been dying to get my hands on a copy of this as it's, of course, about my favorite Italian city, Venice.

Corinna

Venice, exactly. The most unique city on Earth.

Katy

Absolutely.

Corinna

The most incredible, spectacular mesmerizing city on Earth. It's just incredible. So I'm very, very excited about the new book. And everything is very exciting right now.

Katy

It is. So before we get started talking about the book and the magical city, can you remind our listeners who you are in a little bit about your series of Glam Italia guides?

Corinna

Yeah. I'm Corinna Cooke, and I have two sides to my business. On one side, I run the Glam Italia Tours, which are small group women-only tours. And the other side, this whole big thing that we're going to be talking about today is my books. I write a series of books called the Glam Italia Series. And the first one is How to Travel Italy, so how to put together a trip, how to figure it all out, where to stay and how long to stay, and all the different bits and pieces and how to make a good trip into a beyond outstanding trip. And then the second book in this series is Glam Italia 101 Fabulous Things to do in Rome, followed by Glam Italia 101 Fabulous Things to do in Florence. And now we're up to book four, which is Glam Italia 101 Fabulous Things to do in Venice, the most unique city on earth.

Katy

It's so exciting. Well, I think maybe some people might think, well, is there 101 things to do in Venice? Because unfortunately, sometimes people go to Venice and dip in for the day, don't they? And they might see a few things

Corinna

We don't want to be doing that we want to try and be there for I would say to people, try and be there for three nights. There is so much to see and do in Venice and to experience in

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Venice and to kind of participate in you cannot beat sitting out in the summer evening in Venice with an aperitivo and a view and just watching Venice happen and watching the light over the city and oh, my goodness, it's like nowhere else. But when people say 101 things, I had to cut a third of this book out. It's how far over I've gone. We were like, all right, this is getting ridiculous now, we've got to cut back a third to bring it to. And actually, it's more than 101. But I just like the sound. But also, these books are different than regular guidebooks because I feel that regular guidebooks tell you about the same handful of places where all the mass tourism goes. And it's like they steer the ship straight into the storm. So your entire experience is being around thousands of people waiting in line, whereas all of these cities that I take you to with my books have so much more to offer, and there's so much amazing stuff to see and do that's just going to blow your mind. And you walk in these places and there's nobody there. There's like a handful of travelers that are in the know, we focus on places where the tour busses don't go and where the cruise people don't go. There's a handful in the Venice book, of course, we have to talk about Piazza San Marco. And I'm going to talk about some of this today, but most of the book is just taking you where the tourists don't go and you'll be bamboozled by all these incredible things to see and do.

Katy

Yeah, it's amazing. And I think Venice is a little bit misunderstood because people maybe don't take the time to explore. And we're going to talk about how we can explore the city with you a little bit later, but maybe we can explore why we've come to that point and what the typical tourist normally does in Venice. And so how we can unpack that and then suggest to people how they can have an amazing experience in Venice, because we don't want you to come back saying, oh, Venice is a bit like a Disneyland, because, my goodness, it is not. Absolutely not. And you can't keep me away from there. Actually, I love it so much.

Corinna

It's like a love affair that you can't get over. I've come to realize there will never be a point in my life where I'm like, I've been 110 times to Venice. I'm not going back. It's like it gets inside you. What happens, though, is with mass tourism, the mass tourism model is all about getting as many people as possible and squishing them into a place. So that's how you get that kind of Disneylandy thing happening where you have, say, five cruise ships in port, that's 20,000 people. And they all jump into this one section of the historic center, which is from the Rialto Bridge to just marginally beyond Piazza San Marco because they all want to see the Bridge of Sighs. And so during the day because they get off the boat at 8.30 or something. So from, say, 09:00 in the morning till 05:00 at night, whatever time they're going to go back to all-you-can-eat buffet on the boat. It's packed - you want to avoid the area during that time. But early in the morning and my goodness, the evenings, oh, my gosh, you just die. And I still die every single time. It's just so gorgeous. So you need to approach that little strip. And if you have a look on the map, we're talking about a mile or something. It's not even - it's a tiny little strip that gets packed and if you let that be your Venice experience, you're probably not going to enjoy it. Do that same strip once they're all back on the boat, you'll be so in love

with it, you won't even believe it. But it means that most of the people going to Venice, they're going to only see that, and that's going to be their only experience. So if we go beyond that, there's all the things to fall in love with and then once they're back on the boat, then we come back through that area, and you'll be like, oh, my God, look at the piazza, look at the bridge. Look at this and the other. And you'll just be in love. And the whole thing about this book is to make you fall in love with Venice. And the only way I can make you fall in love with Venice is to take you through and show you all these cool things.

Katy

So exciting. Well, why don't you start telling us about them? Because I can't wait. Because I always learned something from you.

Corinna

Well, part of what I wanted with this book was to encourage people to spend, say, three nights in Venice, because a lot of people think of it as a day trip. So we need to kind of, like, move that thinking a little bit so that you can take advantage of lots of the things. One thing that I noticed when I'm looking at the mass tourism tour groups, they've all got the little things in their ears, and they're stomping along, trying to remember which color flag they're following today and trying to hear what the guide is saying and they're overwhelmed and exhausted most of the time. With the mass tourism model is to show you this building and then get to that bridge and then get to this building. And now we're done. And so people miss out on all these incredible little details. And so what I thought I'd talk about today was a bunch of cool, crazy details to look at when you're walking around in Venice that once you've seen them, you cannot unsee them. And so I'll point them out to my tour travelers, and they'll half lose their minds. And then they'll be like, look at all these people - they're not even looking at it. They're not even seeing this. And it makes it really fun. And Venice is - Venice has a sensational history. It's just so intriguing. And all the different people coming and the going. And it was the center of the universe for a few centuries. It was where trade happened. Everything that came from the east and the Middle East and the Far East came through to Europe, through Venice, and then from Europe, it went back out. Stuff went back out to the east. So you have all these incredible influences, and you see it in everything from the cuisine to the architecture to all the bits and pieces, which we're going to talk about some of them right now. So one of the ones I wanted to tell you about is one of my favorites, and literally nobody knows about it. And it is not even a two-minute walk from San Pantalon, which is an area that you're going to be. If you're in Venice, you're going to be by San Pantalon at some point. So it's like a two minute walk from there. This is in the Dorsoduro. And it's the story of this - it's called the General's Medallion. And the story is in 1256, Venetian general Giovanni Tiepolo was leaving to go fight battles against the Genoese in Acre, and his friends were making fun of him and his military skills and saying, you're going to suck. If you think you're going to win something, you've got to bring us back something to show that you've actually won. So he brings back this giant stone medallion. So they call it a medallion. It's a big round stone thing, right? And he comes home and he sticks it on the wall of his friend's

house. It's like, see what I did? Now, this stone medallion, it's insane. It's so killer. It has a partner piece. It's part of a two-piece collection. The second piece is in the Dumbarton Oaks Museum in Washington, DC. And it's one of the prime pieces of Byzantine art that they have. It turns out that these two medallions, it's a father and son, Alexios Komnenos and John the second Komnenos, who are co-emperors of Byzantium from 1092 to 1118. And these big stone round medallion, to me a medallion sounds like something you wear around your neck, but it's like a big round stone thing. They were to commemorate them. You have one of them priceless work of art in Dumbarton Oaks Museum. And the other one is on the wall of a house in this little rando campiello you wouldn't even believe it. And so much of Venice is like an outdoor museum, if you know what to look for. And I'll take my people through there. We will be in San Pantalon, there'll be a lot of people around, we go down the street around the corner, turn right and go into this little campiello, which is like a little piazza, but it's a small one that would be like for a handful of houses. And boom, there it is, just there on the wall doing its thing.

Katy

It's so cool, isn't it? Like, you can imagine the one in Washington, DC has got all these laser cameras focused on it. Here it is just in some random street. Well, that reminds me of when I was there a few years ago, and we were down - I was on a food tour, actually. And they took us down into this tiny campiello and they said, oh, yeah, Christopher Columbus was born in that building. I was like, okay, yeah, Christopher Columbus. Sorry, Marco Polo Marco Polo was born.

Corinna

Yeah, it's so fascinating that the history of Venice and just the layers and layers of stuff. There's another one that I wanted to tell you about that is up at the Arsenale. Most people can use Piazza San Marco as a reference. I'm talking about a ten, maybe 15 minutes walk from Piazza San Marco. So it's not far at all. The Arsenale was the shipyard. And I guess a lot of people probably don't know that Venice invented the factory line. So they had this big shipyard called the Arsenale, and they could make a whole ship in one day because they invented this thing where it comes to this person's spot, and they do this section and it moves along to the next spot and they do the next section, and it was like the biggest, most important shipyard in the world for a time. But anyway, at the gateway, the doorway into the Arsenal, there are two lions, big stone lions. The one on the left is the Piraeus Lion, and he's fascinating. He's 9ft tall, for starters. He's a fourth century BC marble lion that was originally guarding the Port of Athens. And then in 1687, Francesco Morosoni, I should say he was a naval commander for the Venetians, and he stole them. But what he's also famous for is not just stealing this lion, but blowing up the Parthenon. So at the time, the Ottomans had overtaken Athens, and they stored all their gunpowder in the Parthenon. And Morosini sends in one of his cannonballs, and Kaboom blows up one of the great treasures of the world. He destroys it. But anyway, he comes back to Venice with this lion and then gets made Doge. I grew up calling him the Dogas. And then my guide, Emmanuele would say, Dog-e.

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Katy

Dog-e sounds so much nicer, doesn't he?

Corinna

Yes, it sounds so much more interesting. Dog-e. It sounds so much better when he's saying it. Anyway, so now we fast forward. So this lion's been standing there outside the Arsenal since 1687. Now, in the 18th century, the Swedish scholar discovered that there was a strange decoration around the shoulders of the lion - like carved into him. And he looked into it more closely and discovered it's 1000 year old Viking runes. And so it's a Lindworm is what it's called and which is like a headless serpent. So it almost looks like a ribbon going around his shoulders. And inside it is all these encryptions. It's super cool. And I think it was a Varangian mercenary. So these Viking mercenaries were working for Byzantine - the Byzantine Empire for a while back in, like, the 1000s or 1100s, something like that. And they think that one of these mercenaries was with the lion and carved this thing into him. It's so old and it's so cool. And I have never seen a single human being go, look at it apart from me. And I'm, like, falling apart, like it's. "Oh, my God, look at that" and taking all these photos of it.

Corinna

And it's just a cool thing to see, and it's right by - I'm going to give you this one for free. I don't normally tell the names of my favorite restaurants because I don't want them to get overrun, but it's really close to Salvmeria which when you see it written down, it's written Salv with a V Meria. It's how they used to do their use. They used to do them as a V. But Salvmeriat is one of the most fantastic restaurants ever. And it's Sicilian Venetian, so it's Sicilians and Venetians running this thing. And there's this dude called Bruno, who he's a sommelier, and he runs the whole front of house, and he's adorable. And this place is fantastic. You won't see tourists there, but you'll see travelers there, and you'll see virtually every time I go there, it's all Italians. And you're sitting outside on the sidewalk of this really wide street. So you're up away from the tourists, and you look straight down towards the water. So the views are beautiful, the light's beautiful, the ambience is beautiful. And on the day that I arrive and I fly in, I try to not have alcohol and not have pasta because I've got to get myself, make sure I'm not jet-lagged, get into tour guide mode. And so last time I went to Salvmeria, Bueno comes over and he's like, chatting. And I'm like, yeah, I just had a 27 hours travel day to get here, so I'm not going to do pasta tonight, and I'm not going to do any wine tonight. And he's like, oh, so I guess you don't want to know about the pasta with the pancetta and Sicilian pistachios they just flew in this morning. Don't worry, I won't tell you. I'm like, all right, so I'll have that. And he's like, if you're not having a wine, I probably shouldn't tell you about... So five minutes later, I'm sitting there with my plate of pasta and this fabulous wine.

Corinna

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I just love it. It's so fun. But you're away from the crowds, you're having this true Venetian experience, Venetian Sicilian experience in this case. And there are so many really cool things to see all around you, all around the Arsenale and the lion. And I guarantee you, when you spot it, when you go and you spot because it's really faint. Now it's 1000 year old Viking runes. 1000 years of weather gets it worn down a little bit. But when you know to look for it, it's so cool.

Katy

I love it. I think that's what's really intriguing and magical about Venice, because it is one of the original melting pot cities, really. And you have all these cultures coming together in this one magnificent, gorgeous city - from the domes of San Marco with these beautiful Byzantine domes that you don't see anywhere else in Italy. And just I feel like it's a melting pot of different cultures that's really attractive to me. I find it intriguing and mysterious, and I hope that it's our future as well, because I feel like there's a lot of angst around people mixing. But I think this is where it all comes together and it's beautiful.

Corinna

If you were in Rome, in ancient Rome, you would have seen all the skin colors, all the ethnicities, all the everything. It was boom, all put in there and 15 years a slave, you could become a Roman citizen. It's very, very interesting. With Venice, it's easy to get overwhelmed because it's so enormously visual. So I always say to my travelers, when the big picture gets too overwhelming, we zoom in and we focus on some small details. When the small details start being too overwhelming, we zoom back out and we look at the big picture. The level of details to look at is just unbelievable. And I mean, I'm there all the time with my locally licensed guides, and they're walking my groups through. So I'm not the one doing all the chitter-chatter. I'm the one following in the rear

Katy

Taking notes.

Corinna

Actually, I do because you can be with the same guide, like over, and they're always saying new things. I'm like, wait, what? I have a section in the book about Piazza San Marco, and it's all these cool things to look for, so I don't get too deep into the Basilica, like, I have a handful of things that I really need to look at, but there's all these other things in there that people don't know about. And one of the things I wanted to tell you today, it's one of my favorites and I promise you, everybody listening. When you go to Venice, you will not be able to unsee this. And you're going to see a million people in the Piazza and the Piazzetta, and you'll see that none of them are spotting what you're spotting. So the Doges Palace is actually along what they call the Piazzetta. So it's like an L shape from the main Piazza San Marco, the ground floor of the Doges Palace is 36 columns holding it up, right. And each column, the

capital of each column, each of these 36 columns, each one is different. They're obviously hand-carved because they are centuries old but it's the Encyclopedia of Venice. It tells the story of Venice. Venice was closer to the Byzantine Empire than it was to Rome. So we don't have an overload of Pope stuff rammed down our throats in Venice. I do enjoy Pope's behaving badly, but you're getting, like, a lot of different messaging. So the three corners, because the backside of the Doges Palace is actually a waterway. So we have three corners. The first corner is by the Basilica, San Marco.

Corinna

And then we have the corner at the end and then the far corner, which you would look around that corner to see the Bridge of Sighs. So those three are religious capitals. They're telling part of a religious story. And the rest is telling the other parts of the story of Venice. And it's fascinating. And the first one I'd want to draw your attention to is the end one. So if you're going to look around the corner to see the Bridge of Sighs from the front side of the Doge's Palace, and it's Drunken Noah. Now, I don't know what religious education you had, but I had no idea Noah was a drunk. I mean, he was the original Drunken Sailor.

Katy

That was actually the first song I learned to play on the guitar.

Corinna

The Drunken Sailor. Oh, my goodness. When I discovered this, I about keeled over. It was so funny. So the capital of - that last capital, number 36, is Noah is all drunk and he's naked drunk. His two sons are leaning around the corner. So they're around the side where the Bridge of Sighs is. They're leaning around the corner to cover their drunken dad with a blanket. And I'm like, oh, my God. So each of the capitals tells another part of the story of Venice. There's all kinds of different ones, but they have these incredible people ones to look out for. One of the ones to watch for is called Latin Women. And it's these different faces of women coming around the capital. So if I'm losing anybody here, we have the column. And then that piece that goes around the top of the column is the capital. So with the Latin women, you have all these different ethnicities coming in, living in Venice and all these different types of women. And so they're all looking out and all of them are doing this 1000 yard stare. They're looking way beyond you way, into the distance, apart from one. And she looks right at you and she has a slight smile on her face. And once you see her, you can't walk through there without seeing her smiling at you. She's the coolest thing. She has one of those. I'm not sure exactly what period it was from when the women would have that scarf thing that went around their neck like ear to ear, below their chin.

Katy

A wimple. I think it's a wimple.

Corinna

But it's really neat. And when you see her and she's looking at you and she's smiling like she's got a little secret, and then you can't not see her. You cannot. Once you spotted her the first time, you cannot walk along the Doge's Palace and not see her smiling at you. I've tried. I can't.

Katy

It's so intriguing.

Corinna

And there's another one. Column number 21 is called People of the World. I love all the people ones the most. They have ones that have animals and all kinds of things, but I find that people one is the most fascinating. And this one's really cool because it shows different ethnicities that were living and working in Venice throughout Venice's history. So there's a Moor who's wearing a turban. There's a Mongolian Tatar, and he's got this whole cool hat thing going on. But if you look the guy to the left of the Mongolian, there's this guy with elf ears, and it's like the wildest craziest thing. And again, it's like once you spotted the elf ears, you can't unsee them, and it's impossible to walk along there and your eye not like ping off and go, oh, my God, he's got elf ears. But there he is. But it's really neat.

Katy

It's like you would totally miss it if you don't pay attention.

Corinna

If someone doesn't point it out to you - and I've been to Venice many times before it was pointed out to me - and then it's one of those things you see at once and boom, it's there every time. And it makes walking along that stretch even more interesting because you've got this whole other world that you're looking at, and if you watch around, nobody else is even noticing. But I always think it must have been so amazing back there. Venice was the center of the Earth. It was the wealthiest city on Earth, well in Europe anyway. It was the most important city. And to be someone that was not a white Venetian, like someone from a different race, to be able to walk through the most important stretch of the most important city in the world and see people that look like you immortalized in stone saying 'you were here', that must have been just absolutely amazing.

Katy

Yeah.

Corinna

And then there's another thing, while we're in that little stretch that probably a lot of people know about, but in case you don't know, opposite the Marciana library, where the Doge's Palace is, we're not facing the lagoon, but a little bit further up opposite the library, you look up to the second floor, and you have all the white Istrian stone columns and two pink ones. You know about the pink columns?

Katy

Tell us more.

Corinna

There's a whole fantastic story with those. These pink columns, so the pink actually symbolizes blood also have been told, but it was from here. The Doge would stand between these columns to announce death sentences. And if an aristocrat, if somebody from the golden book was being executed for committing a crime, they would be hung between these two pink columns. And so everybody could see in the busiest part of the most important city in the world, this is what happens if you go against the Republic. During Carnavale, and they still do this now, talking back hundreds of years that this has been happening, there's a part of the Carnavale called the Svolo del Turco where an angel floats on a high wire from the Campanile down to meet the Doge in between these two pink columns. So that's kind of cool to see, to imagine how that must have been back then. They still do it now, but now we have so much more technology.

Katy

It would have been a pretty risky business to get up there back in the day.

Corinna

Can you imagine? And they're dressed up as an angel.

Katy

I wouldn't be volunteering for that job.

Corinna

No, me neither. But then also, if the Doge was going to watch a public hanging, he would watch it from between these two pink columns. And so again, once you see them and you realize just what was going on there, it's absolutely amazing. And then when you look if you're standing in the Piazzetta and you now turn so you have the Doge's Palace on your left, and you look towards the lagoon, we have the two big columns of Venice, which are also fascinating. And it was between those columns that they would have the hangings, but there was a way to not be hung, which is really cool. And that is when we get to the corner of the Doge's Palace and it turns to the left. So you go down the Piazzetta and it turns to the left. The

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fourth column along is out of alignment. And so they had this thing where if the convicted person could walk, I think it was back to the column. If he could walk around the circumference of it and not lose his balance, then his sentence will be absolved. And I'm not sure now that they have the laws about not being able to stand and sit on monuments - I'm not sure if you can still do it. If you can still try and try and go around that circle and not fall over.

Katy

Sounds elegant. Sounds like you tried.

Corinna

I tried it like years ago. I haven't tried it recently, but it's a good thing to know about. And then those two columns at the entrance to the lagoon from the Piazzetta. So the one on the left, the side that's closest to the Doge's Palace, is the column of St. Mark. And it has the winged lion of St. Mark on top of it. And then the other one is San Teodoro, who was the previous Saint before the relics got stolen.

Katy

I wasn't going to mention the stolen relics.

Corinna

Stealing of the relics is like one of my favorite, favorite things. But there's really interesting stuff when you're walking through there. You need to make sure you look up and look at that lion. That one's now a replica. The real one is inside the Museum in the Doge's Palace. But they did like carbon dating or whatever you call it when you're figuring out how old these things are. And they've traced him back to the end of the fourth century BC, beginning of the third century BC. And he was from Tarsus in south central Turkey. And he was this God called Sandon. And Sandon was the God of war and weather. And he was depicted, he would be on a winged lion, like riding a winged lion standing up on its back. And so this lion moving around the area and somehow wound up in Venice on the top of the column and he's had some rebuilds to him over the last 2000 years. But when Napoleon came in in 1797 and he raided everything, he stole so much stuff. One of the things he did was he stole this lion and he took it to Paris and put it on top of a fountain in the Place des Invalides in Paris and then in 1815, it was to be returned to Venice. He was not allowed to have that pilfering anymore. But what they did when they took it down from the top of this fountain, they either sabotaged it or they had an accident. But he crashed to the ground and broke into 20 pieces. So these 20 pieces were then taken back to the Arsenal by our Piraeus lion friend from the same kind of era and he was put back together and then he was put back up on that column in 1816 but they took him down for World War II and he only got put back up in 1991. And then the other one, you look at the top of the other column and you have Saint Theodore who was the Slayer

of Dragons and somewhere along the line his dragon got replaced with a crocodile. So I don't quite know how, but you see him up there, he's up there with his crocodile.

Katy

Obviously, he was a bit scared of big dragons and the crocodile was easier.

Corinna

But it's really cool. And then there's another - one last thing I want to tell you about those columns is that again, you will see nobody looks at this, nobody sees this, but these two enormous columns that came over from Constantinople, they stand on octagonal bases and those octagonal bases each had sculptures around the bottom of them depicting the various arts and craft skills that paid to have these columns erected. Now over the last thousand years, most of it has been degraded, but the only one that's still visible on the bottom of the St. Mark's column is the green grocers displaying their fruit and veggies in these wicker baskets. And then if you look across at the San Theodora one, you can see there's a blacksmith raising his hammer to hit an anvil, there's a fishmonger offering fish from a basket and two very faint ones which are possibly a butcher and a winemaker, but it's just neat like these thousand-year-old sculptures still there. And I love all these crazy little details to look for.

Katy

Yeah, I think it's really fascinating to see that people pretty much live the same way that we do now in a lot of ways. Things change, but things stay the same thing in the context of this magical city. That's what I love actually, is the juxtaposition between this stunning architecture and all these details. And then you have just normal life going along.

Corinna

And they see this stuff every single day and it's just things they walk past in life, whereas like we might walk past 711 or something.

Corinna

So another thing I wanted to talk about is when people take trips to Murano to see the glass. A lot of times, if you're not in the know, you'll be encouraged to get on one of these factory free boats where they'll have a free boat that takes you over and it takes you straight to a specific factory store and you're expected to buy from them. So we don't want to do that. We're going to have a different plan. And you can walk up to Fondamente Nove. So from again, from Piazza San Marco, which we're using as a center point to walk to Fondamente Nove, is maybe 15 minutes. Like, walking through brain-bendingly, gorgeous, ancient Venice. It's insane. It actually takes me longer because I keep stopping and taking photos and talking to people and all this kind of stuff. But it's a beautiful walk through the Fondamente Nove.

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There's a whole lot of things I tell you about in the book that are on the way, like, it's all happening, right, and through there. But it's really easy to just jump on the Vaporetto from there and was over to tell her takes 20 minutes. But before we get on that boat, we're going to hang a left. So we're up there on Fondamente Nove. We're going to walk up just like a block and hang a left. And there's a church called the Gesuiti. Have you been to Gesuiti?

Katy

Yeah. Incredible.

Corinna

It's absolutely nuts. It's a really rococo of baroque thing. But I always think of that if Jesus took LSD, this is what would happen.

Katy

Zero restraint. There's no restraint there at all.

Corinna

It's one of the most amazing things you ever see. But it's just so full on. It's like a madman fever dream. So this church has three chapels along the sides on each side, and the chapels have these plasters separating them. And those are the only surfaces in the entire church that are not decorated. And it's an explosion of decoration. And there's these twirly barley sugar columns that are, like twirling around on themselves going up. There's marble inlay that's made to look like fabric. There's insane art in there, like Tintoretto and Titian and stuff. It's just so much. And it, to me, looks very different than the rest of Venice. And it has a really interesting story behind it, because this church was originally built in 1155 by this religious order called the Crociferi, which are the cross-bearers. And then in, like, 1651, Pope Alexander VII suppressed that order. It was like, no, you're done. So now they had this empty church. They were kicked out. The Crociferi were kicked out, and they've got this empty church that coincided with Venice needing more money. And the Jesuits had been kicked out of Venice, like, 60 years prior, and they had to give up their beautiful church in Dorsoduro. But now Venice needed money so they said you can come back, but only if you buy this church on the outskirts of town. Actually, as it turned out, they were expelled again later on, but they were never popular in Venice. So when they came back, that's probably why they built it so over the top was just like, 'ha you don't like us, we'll take that'

Katy

'We're back!'

Corinna

It's a visual banquet and the wow factor of this church is just off the charts and it's all kind of a bit nutty. I love anything that's kind of a little bit off beat, but it's literally a block from where you get the Vaporetto to go over to Murano. So this is another reason to be staying in Venice for a couple of nights, two or three nights, because there's so many things to do and it's really nice to have a day where you can at will get a Vaporetto pass. It's \$20 or €20 for the day and just meander around the islands. So the first one is Murano. And yes, it's where all the glass blowing is and yes, there's all the glass factories. But if you keep walking, I like to get off and just walk straight up the main drag where all the glass factory shops are like we're talking about three blocks or something, you get to the end and now you're getting into a whole different world of Murano with really phenomenal old buildings and just really cool stuff to look at. And one of the things that's really interesting there is the Basilica of Santa Maria and San Donato. This is the 7th-century Basilica. It's one of the oldest in Venice. It had a rebuild in 1125 and it got this amazing mosaic floor. I mean, to me it's worthwhile going just to go and see that. Plus it has the relics of the Dragon Slayer, San Donato. So San Donato goes back to Roman times and he was from Arezzo and his claim to Fame was slaying a dragon. Well, it got evolved into slaying a dragon and the dragon's rib bones are behind the altar. So in reality it's probably like a mammoth or something that was dug up, some dinosaur that was dug up. But people really believe that this was a dragon. And so they have these dragon bones behind the altar. So cool and it's so neat to see. And the mosaics are incredible. And in the book, I have a lot of stories about this church and why you would want to go and see it. And it's just so old. And then right by there is another really cool one, this really cool artisan called Alessia Fuga and I've written about her in the book as well. And she makes unbelievable glass jewelry. Like unbelievable. It's Murano glass. It's modern and interesting and you'll find people of all ages and all walks of life enjoy wearing it. In fact, I was at a Prosecco winery and the lady that owns the winery was talking to us and explaining stuff and I'm looking at this necklace she has on. I'm like, I hate to interrupt you, but is that an Alessia Fuga? And she's like, "yes, it is!" She's like so excited. But it's a really wonderful, wonderful artisan that is well worthwhile. If you're in Murano, you must walk up there and go see her shop. And then she's into the whole experiential travel movement as well, which is very big in Venice. You have all these different types of artisans that get involved in it, and they offer, like, workshops and classes and demonstrations and things where you can go and see how it's done or have a go making it yourself. The idea is that rather than you walk into a shop just buying something and walking away, that you actually have a connection to the soul of Venice, which I think is really wonderful. And Alessia does that, and she's phenomenal well worth Googling and definitely well worth visiting, especially if you want to get, like a really unique gift for somebody.

Katy

Or for yourself. This is the thing. It wasn't quite Venetian glass, but I've got a pair of sunglasses that I bought in Venice many years ago, and everyone says, I love your sunglasses and I go "yeah, I got them in Venice". And it's because there are so many beautiful it's not just Venice - Italy throughout Italy, you can find this as well, but there's such a commitment to craftsmanship and attention to detail on these things. So if you're wanting to spoil yourself,

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buy a piece of beautiful jewelry and you'll remember it, and when you touch it and it's around your neck or it feels special and you can feel that special part of Venice with you.

Corinna

I'm a big believer that when you're buying souvenirs when you're buying something from your trip to bring home with you, it must be something that has an emotional connection. If you're just walking into a high street store and buying or whatever off the rack in some high street store, from some store that is all around the world anyway, it's not going to resonate with you when you pull it out of the closet and you're going to forget in a year's time, where did I get that from? What was that? It's not going to make any sense to you. But when you go to the workshop of an artisan and in Italy, they are everywhere. This is what Italy was built on. And you're able to see that artisan at work and you're able to talk to them and you're able to become a part of this experience that actually holds with you. And you'll pull that item out, whether it's something that you're pulling out of your closet or whether it's some knickknack thing that you bought for your house, it will mean something to you every single time you see it. And that's what it's about. That's what you want to take home, something that you remember where you were and why you were there and what happened and what the lady said that's what it's all about. But I have another one.

Katy

Please tell.

Corinna

So when you had another Venice episode where they touched on this wine and (a fabulous episode by the way), and I wanted to get into it a little bit more. So if you listen to this and you haven't heard the previous Venice episode, go back and listen to it because she was brilliant. But she talks about - when we're in these islands in the lagoon, we have Murano and we have Burano, which is a really famous one with all the fisherman's houses and all the bright colors, the Torcello, which is the oldest of them. But back at Murano, when you're coming in on the Vaporetto, instead of getting off at Burano, get off at the stop before which is called Mazzorbo. Mazzorbo and Burano are connected by a bridge. And if all you do is get off and take the five-minute walk from Mazzorbo into Burano, you are still going to be ahead of all the people getting off the Vaporetto, so you're still doing good. But there is a very special winery on Mazzorbo. It's called Tenuta Venissa. And basically what happened is there's this family called the Bisol family and they've been making prosecco for 500 years up in the Valdobbiadene. And there was this grape that was specific to the lagoon of Venice. It was the only place that it could grow and it was wiped out in about the 1400. And the Bisol family have been looking for it for years. And it's a special golden grape which is the Dorona or D'oro means gold. So long story short, a little over a decade ago, they were able to find a corner of a church was not being used, the garden was not being used and they were able to find three of these plants that were tested and found to be the Dorona grape. So they got the rights to farm it. And so the Tenuta Venissa in Mazzorbo, the winery part of it is this Dorona grape and

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they only make 4000 bottles per year. It's very, very unique and prestigious, quite incredible. It's a vibrant gold-colored wine and it has this very velvety, full-flavored, like a full-flavored white wine. It's beautiful. It has no pesticides or anything because the salt spray that comes off the water with the wind, keeps all the buggies away. Their first vintage was in 2012. And as I said, they make 4000 bottles per year. The bottles are hand-blown by Carlo Moretti on Murano. He's one of the really famous glass blowers. And the bottles have gold leaf on them, like gold leaf labels that are made by the Battiloro family in Cannaregio. And these have been Goldsmiths in Venice for 1000 years - their family. So everything about this experience, even just looking at a bottle, you're just taking in all of this history of Venice. And each bottle is hand-labeled and like hand-numbered and the gold is fused directly onto the bottle, and they get a new label every year as well. So you have this experience where you've got this wine that only grows here, that wine does not grow anywhere else in the world. And then you've got multiple Venetian artisans who have been involved in the creation of this project. And the bottles are expensive. But what an unbelievable and unique gift to bring back for yourself or for anybody else.

Katy

Yeah. Just so precious. There's no way to describe the contrast between the way that we kind of live our lives - just go choose something on Amazon or you know what I mean? It's just a completely different respect for art and culture and history. I love it. It's beautiful.

Corinna

It's incredible. So the last thing I wanted to talk about is another cool option for neat stuff to do in Venice is to whip over to Giudecca Island. So from San Marco or actually from the San Zaccaria Vaporetto stop, which is at San Marco, we're just beyond the Doges Palace. It's a three-minute ride to Isola San Giorgio, and then three minutes more, and you're on the Giudecca. So the Giudecca is a long, slim island that looks across at the Dorsoduro, which is the other side of the Grand Canal. So you have the Giudecca Canal running between the two of them, and you find not that many people know to go over there. And it is just fantastic. There's so much cool stuff to see and do. And you can even if you just get off at the first stop, which I think is Zitelle, and just walk the Fondamenta. So it's one big, long Fondamenta that goes along the whole stretch. And it's got all these gorgeous little restaurants and bars and lovely eateries. And you can sit out there and have lunch. And you look across the canal at Dorsoduro and at Santa Maria della Salute.

Corinna

It's just fabulous, fabulous, fabulous. And it's a very artisan island. So there's lots of kind of like art colonies. There's a fantastic building called the Three Eyes, which has become a famous photography museum that has all kinds of unbelievable exhibitions and stuff going on in there. But there's a place that I want to tell you about that as you're walking a little ways along the Fondamenta. It's the Convento dei Santi Cosma e Damiano, which was a 15th-century convent. So what they would do when you had these really, really, really

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wealthy families, if they had a bunch of daughters, you had to kind of offload them because all these daughters marrying into other families were going to dilute the family fortune. So they stick them in convents. And this one was actually set up by one of the really wealthy Noble families. And it was a convent until Napoleon came along and he dissolved it and used it as a barracks for his military. So a lot of the art was lost, but in the 1980s, the government made this initiative. It's called *Casa e Bottega*. And it goes back to the ancient or the old system of the shop would be at the bottom of the shop in the workshop, and the artist would live above. So they've done that here with it's called the *Artisti Artigiani del Chiostro*. And so you've got these fantastic old cloisters, you can walk through the building in the courtyard and everything. It's really cool to see. And it's kind of like nicely run down, so it's not polished, which is really cool. And it has this workshop space for ten artisans. I don't think they have all ten in at the moment, but it is so cool. And you see all these really neat, different art forms. Like, there's this one guy that works with paper and makes these incredible paper lampshades. And it's all very different to what you see elsewhere. And it's all great stuff to bring home as souvenirs and as gifts for people. I tend to do all of my Christmas shopping when I'm in Italy. So I'm always like popping in on these places and finding really neat, unusual things to bring home. But that's well worthwhile to go and have a look at. And it's like, go have lunch, go have a look at that.

Corinna

There's another very famous church along the way there - another one of my favorites is Sant'Eufemia. So this one was first built in 865, and it had various renovations over the centuries. And when you go inside, you can kind of see all these centuries of life, like this plaster chipped away. There's old columns and old brickwork, some really tremendous art. And one of my favorite things, I'll probably offend lots of people with this, but it's what I consider really hilarious pietà? So instead of the pietà where you have Mary and she's cradling Jesus dead body and it's all traumatic and everything. With this one, instead of him lying in Mary's lap, he's kind of draped over a rock and she has her right arm raised up over him, and it looks like she's about to smash him over the head with a rock. Like she's probably doing something really religiously or something. But to me, when I first saw it, I was like, oh, my God, she's about to hit him. And so now I can't look at it and not see her about to smash him. And also she looks like she's twelve. So this whole thing is all just so incongruous. But it's also brilliant. And I don't know, it's kind of neat. It's a fun thing to go have a look at when you're in Giudecca. And I swear you'll start laughing when you start thinking that she's going to smash him with the rock.

Corinna

But the last thing I want to tell you about and try and go quickly because I'm talking too long on Giudecca is they have what was convent called *Le Convertite*, which was for reformed prostitutes and sexually besmirched women were put into this convent. And then there was the priest was Fra Giovanni Leon. He made the 400 nuns in there into his personal harem.

Katy

Maybe the pieta is maybe like a reflection of what was going on there, who knows?

Corinna

But the Council of Ten found out about it. And so in 1561, they beheaded him. But they took 13 tries to chop his head off and it didn't work. But in the end they got a knife and chopped it off. But anyway, the old convent has now become the women's prison. And they have this really great philosophy of, rather than being a philosophy of punishing people, it's about rehabilitation and teaching people skills that they can use when they come back out to the real world. So they have an unbelievable organic garden in there. And one of the programs available to women incarcerated here is that they can work making toiletries for the Bauer Hotel Group. So beautiful smelling toiletries they make there. On Thursdays, if you're in Venice on a Thursday morning, you can buzz over to Guidecca and they have an organic market outside the prison. So all these organic fruits and vegetables that the women are growing, they have them out and market stands outside. And so half of Venice goes over to buy them. It's some of the best produce you're going to find anywhere.

Corinna

And then they have this other program that I'm kind of obsessed with. It was this group called la cerc, which means the Circle. They decided it would be really good to teach women how to sew. And they created this program. It was called actually il cerchio not la cerc back in 2003. I think it was. They figured that if they could teach them how to make clothing, it was going to give them a usable, necessary skill, something that society needs. So any inmate who wants to can learn how to sew. And then those that - there are some that just want to learn how to sew, that's what they want to do. And there's others that want to evolve into working in design. So being Italy, Italy is full of incredible designers. They have these designers and design teams working with these women, teaching them how to make unbelievable clothing. And the fabrics that they're working with are donated by Fortuny, Rubelli and Bevilacqua. So you have these unbelievable, unbelievable fabrics. And so they actually have a shop that they sell them. And the women are taught to make really classically, beautiful dresses, classic, timeless, exquisite fashion and the greatest fabrics you can possibly get. And over in Castello, back over to San Marco, not even a ten-minute walk from Piazza San Marco, they have a shop which is called Banco Lotto number Ten. This is the shop that sells these clothes. And to me, there's no more sustainable travel thing that you can do than to buy a piece of clothing that's locally made by these women in the prison learning these good skills that they can come out into the world and integrate into society and be something, not go back to whatever sent them in there in the first place. But the clothing is, oh, my goodness, it is phenomenal. And it's designed to be pieces that you would keep for forever and where for forever. And, oh, my gosh.

Katy

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Heirloom pieces. Now, Corinna, this has been absolutely phenomenal. You know, so many little stories and pieces of information about Venice. Now I'm tipping you didn't find them on Google. So I'm curious, how do you find all these amazing pieces and snippets of gorgeousness all around Venice?

Corinna

Well, I'm obsessed with finding interesting things, so there's an element of researching everything to death. But I work with local guides in Venice all the time. So all of my tour groups, when I bring a tour group in, it's not me telling you the stories. I have local guides that I work with. They step in and they take over the tour for that morning and they're showing their thing or doing their thing. And I find that even though I've been going to Venice for more than 30 years, I am still learning new things every single time, just constantly. And so I'm a huge proponent of using local, licensed guides. So they have to be licensed. So they're actually part of the Venice license guide profession. But what I've done with this book is I have a link inside the book that you can get a PDF that you can download with guides that I work with that I can recommend because it can be really tricky if you're arriving to a city you don't know you haven't been to before. Like how on Earth are you supposed to find a really good licensed local guide? So all of them do general walking tours, but the ones on the PDF, they all have some kind of really interesting specialty. So I have one that's a specialty foodie guide. She does the most outstanding foodie tours you could possibly imagine. I have another one who, amongst just so many things, she's fascinating, but she said to me, she came to realize that Venice is a very difficult place for somebody who's either vision impaired, a blind or impaired vision or somebody who's in a wheelchair. It's a difficult place because it's canals and bridges. So she developed specialty tours for people who either have sight-impaired or are in wheelchairs or otherwise mobility impaired, which I think is brilliant. And then I have another one who specializes in one of her sub specialties is doing these amazing tours for kids. So kids of all ages. And she creates these incredible treasure hunts and scavenger hunts with them. And it's just dynamic. I have another one in there who - her degree was in Japanese language and Japanese art. And she went on to work at the Oriental Museum in Venice and then got poached by the Peggy Guggenheim. So of course she does all of the normal walking tours. But if you are interested in modern art, Venice is one of the world's centers of modern art. Like, some of the greatest collections in the world are there. Like, it's something that I'm not conversant in. So I can pick up Erica and have her take us through, and she can just, like, open the whole world to you when it comes to modern art. And I have another one who - he went to University for archeology, specializing in Islamic archeology. And of course, Venice, the architecture, all the stuff that was plundered and bought over all has all the Islamic background to it. So when you have someone like that who can explain to you what you're seeing and what the relevance is and why this building looks like this and where the foot from that statue was actually found 30 years ago underneath this mosque that was being excavated in Turkey. And it just is fascinating. So I've created this PDF just to help my readers to connect with local people who can just expand things even more for them, which I think is going to be really cool.

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Katy

Yeah, I think that's a resource that's incredible, especially if you're the type of person that's a little bit curious and you've got something that you want to explore a little bit deeper.
Corinna - Auguri! Big congratulations on the publication of this book. I know how much love, thought and attention went into its creation. How can our listeners get their very own copy and discover all of your Venetian secrets? Maybe not all, but a lot.

Corinna

Well, all of my books are exclusive on Amazon, so wherever you are in the world, dial into your local Amazon and you can get it. And if your country doesn't have Amazon, I think there's a way that Amazon gets it to you. So they're all available all around the world. And then all of my social media, the newsletter, everything you can click in from my website, which is corinnacooke.com. So you can just go there and find all the stuff. The Instagram is really fun to follow because that's the one that I really put everything up on as I'm moving around Italy, and you can see all kinds of really great Venice content on there as well. Yeah, that's how to find me.

Katy

So exciting. Corinna, I know this book is just flying off the shelves now, but you know what? I can't wait to hear which books up next.

Corinna

Oh, that's a goodie. There's more on the way, but it's going to take a while. But for now, I just want everybody to come to Venice and fall in love with Venice and see all these amazing things to see and do in Venice. There's chapters on madly chic places that go have an aperitivo. There's a chapter on where to get the greatest coffees and what to eat. And there's a huge chapter on interesting and unusual things to go and see and do and there's so much and I think once you start reading it, you realize how Venice is a very tiny place, but it's just an enormous number of things to see and do there and I can be there ten days straight and I'll get on the train to leave and I was like, man, there's all these other things I wanted to do. I didn't get to you can spend forever there and be in love with it and eat food and drink the drinks and love it all.

Katy

Yeah. Amazing. Well, we're going to go back to Venice and we're going to go exploring and hunting out lions and great little aperitivo bars all with your help. Grazie Corinna. Thank you so much for joining us on Untold Italy again.

Corinna

Thank you Katy and Ciao, everybody.

Katy

Ciao. Ciao.

Katy

Yes I think with all those amazing sights and stories to uncover, it's obvious that you'll need at least 3 days in Venice to truly uncover its magic and mystery. Corinna's book 101 Fabulous Things to do in Venice is jam packed with suggestions to help you plan your time there no matter what your interests are.. Be it the delicious cicchetti snacks that define the city's food culture or the intriguing ghosts of the city or its incredible and rich art heritage. You can find this and all Corinna's Glam Italia travel guides on Amazon and of course we'll put a link to them and all of the places mentioned in this episode in the show notes at untolditaly.com/132

Thanks for your ongoing support of Untold Italy. We truly appreciate all of you, our listeners joining us from around the world. I recently met some of you in Italy including Michelle in the Pantheon in Rome - ciao Michelle! - and I loved hearing all about when and where you listen to the show. So much fun. It's quite incredible that someone driving from North Carolina to Florida is listening to an Australian woman talk to an Italian about the delights of Sorrento.

So we'd be thrilled if you helped spread the word so we can reach more Italy loving travelers just like you. The best way you can do this is by leaving us a 5 star rating or review on your favorite podcast app or forwarding this episode onto a friend who is planning their very own dream trip to Italy .

Next week on Untold Italy we're heading to a different coastal region, Liguria, on the north west pocket of the Italian peninsula. But until then, keep dreaming of Venice and ciao for now